

# **“MARRIAGE ENCOUNTER CIRCLE MADE EASY ”**

**Fred & Julie Schamber**

**15 Circle meeting outlines -- existing material revised into a user-friendly discussion question format that requires no leader preparation**

## **MARRIAGE ENCOUNTER CIRCLE GUIDELINES**

### **FORMAT:**

Opening Prayer

Introductions – welcome new members

Announcements re: upcoming Marriage Encounter activities

Discussion questions or brief presentation

10/10

Open Sharing on the 10/10

Set date, time, location, host, and session leader for the next session

The Lord’s Prayer or other closing prayer

Social time

### **PURPOSES OF CIRCLE:**

- To reinforce the concepts of the weekend such as true listening, persevering in the daily decision to love, and assigning priority to your couple relationship
- To experience strengthening of couple relationships by being with other couples who value their relationship with their spouse.
- To provide a close-knit community where couples can express their feelings without fear of judgment, and experience the love and acceptance of other encountered couples
- To practice the art of sharing feelings through discussion and dialogue
- To encourage couples to reach out and share their couple love through support of Marriage Encounter Weekends as well as support of their church and community

### **SHARING / DISCUSSION GUIDELINES:**

- The Circle should allow for and encourage open sharing of our feelings in a warm, loving, and non-judging atmosphere.
- Sharing is a gift of myself—who I am, how I feel, my joys, hopes, and struggles. It is a decision to love with confidence in those who love and care about us and want us to grow.
- Sharing allows us to speak from the heart and listen with the heart.
- The sharing of others can help us to recognize our own feelings and attitudes.
- There are no right or wrong answers—everyone should feel comfortable about sharing.
- Sharing should be simple, concrete experiences of ourselves in relationship to the question.
- Concentration is on really listening without interrupting or commenting on anything else said.
- Sharing is not a time for problem solving but a time for sharing of our feelings, of who we are right now.
- Practice confidentiality--what is shared in the Circle must stay with the group.
- All sharing is strictly voluntary – share what and when you wish.

## OUTLINES FOR 15 SESSIONS

- Session 1: “Self” – Emphasis on realizing that you are good and loveable.
- Session 2: “Cupleness” – Emphasis on the importance of a deeper relationship.
- Session 3: “God” – Emphasis on developing a closer relationship with God
- Session 4: “Community” – Emphasis on the hope of renewing the world through more concern for one another
- Session 5: “Sharing of Self” -- Emphasis on sharing ourselves and our love and concern in our community
- Session 6: “Reaching Out” – Emphasis on reaching out to others
- Session 7: “Seeing Our Goodness” – Emphasis on seeing our good qualities
- Session 8: “Privacy vs Openness” – Emphasis on importance of openness in our marriage relationships
- Session 9: “Listening” – Emphasis on importance of true listening
- Session 10: “Receiving From Others” – Emphasis on importance of asking and receiving support from others
- Session 11: “Forgiveness & Reconciliation” – Emphasis on the healing power of forgiveness
- Session 12: “Unity in Marriage” -- Emphasis on striving for complete unity in our marriage relationships
- Session 13: “The Gift of Dialogue” – Emphasis on improving communication with your spouse
- Session 14: “The Gift of Leisure” – Emphasis on the importance of sharing leisure time together
- Session 15: “Signs of Love” -- Emphasis on our couple relationship as a mirror of God’s love

Whoever is leading the next session should get a copy of the outline for that session at the previous session. Either they or a designated couple then can make copies to hand out at the meeting. The leader or a designated person may wish to e-mail (or call) any who were not able to be present to inform them of the next meeting and, if deemed necessary, may wish to e-mail (or call) the group a week ahead to remind them of the meeting.

Some circles meet in homes, some in churches. Some meet at weekday nights, Saturday nights, Sunday afternoons, or Sunday nights. If your circle is just starting, try to determine at the first session what is best for the group. You might want to plan one meeting during the year as a social event—dinner out, a family picnic, etc.

Some circles have couples take turns providing the snack, some have everyone bring something simple. Generally the session leading is passed around the group. You may wish to pass around a host/session leader sign- up sheet at the first meeting.

# Session 1 “Self”

## Opening prayer

**Introductions (If this is your first meeting: If possible, pass out list of names, addresses, phones, & e-mails of those interested in possibly participating in the circle)**

- \* Introduce yourself and your spouse.
- \* Tell us about yourselves--when you were married, when you were encountered, your family, jobs, hobbies, etc.

**Announcements re: upcoming Marriage Encounter activities**

**Go over Circle Guidelines if this is the group’s first meeting (see first page)**

**Discussion Questions or brief presentation:**

**Review of 4 personality styles (refer to workbook descriptions)**

1. **What personality style are you—helper, thinker, organizer, catalyst?**
2. **What behaviors do you especially relate to in that category? Any that don’t fit you?**
3. **How does your personality style help your life or get in the way of relationships?**
4. **What does 1 Corinthians 12 *“There are different kinds of gifts...The body is not made up of one part but of many...You are the body of Christ and each one of you is a part of it”* say to you about the different personality styles?**

## Question for 10/10

How can I use my understanding of my and your personality styles to build up our relationship? How do I feel sharing this?

## Open Sharing Question

Share, if you wish, what you have found helpful about discovering your spouse’s and your personality styles on your weekend?

**If this is your first meeting, discuss what is the best day/night to hold the meetings, location (church or homes), and how people prefer to handle the hosting (take turns or everyone bring something). You might want to pass around a sign-up sheet for hosting and session leader. Be sure date, time, place, hosts, and session leaders for next session are set and, if deemed necessary, someone is designated to do a reminder.**

**Closing Prayer -- The Lord’s Prayer**

**Social time**

## Take Home Dialogue Questions on “Self”

What is the biggest change in me since our Marriage Encounter Weekend ? HDIFAT?

What kind of person do I see myself to be? HDIFAT?

What quality in myself have I discovered through your eyes? HDIFAT?

What is the biggest struggle I have had in the last month? HDIFAT?

What goals do I have for me? HDIFAT

How does my self-image affect my view of us? HDIFAT?

## Session 2 “Coupleness”

### Opening prayer

### Introductions –welcome newcomers

- \* Introduce yourself and your spouse.
- \* Tell us about yourselves--when you were married, when you were encountered, your family, jobs, hobbies, etc.

### Announcements re: upcoming Marriage Encounter activities

### Review Circle Guidelines if newcomers present (see first page)

### Discussion Questions or brief presentation:

#### Emphasis on “coupleness”

1. What do you like to do together as a couple?
2. How do I see us as a couple?
3. What is one thing your spouse does that makes you feel loved?
4. If you could give your spouse anything, what would it be?
5. Describe what you would like your life together to be like 5 years from now.
6. What does Ephesians 5 “*...no one ever hates his own body but nourishes and tenderly cares for it just as Christ does for the church because we are members of his body. For this reason a man will leave his father and mother and be joined to his wife and the two will become one flesh*” mean to you?

### Question for 10/10

What possibilities do I see for increasing our “coupleness” in the future? How does this make me feel?

### Open Sharing Question

Share, if you wish, ideas you have for increasing your “coupleness” and your feelings about this.

**Assignment for next meeting:** Romance your spouse in some unexpected ways sometime before the next meeting. (Note in a lunch bag, a phone call at work, a card, a small surprise gift, an afternoon walk or drive, a planned night out, etc.)

### Set date, time, place, hosts, and session leaders for next session

### Closing Prayer -- The Lord’s Prayer

### Social time

### Take Home Dialogue Questions on “Coupleness

What is the biggest change in our relationship since the Weekend? HDIFAMA

What is it about you that calls me to be more? HDIF sharing this with you?

What special quality do you still have that you had when we were married? HDIFAT?

HDIF when you compliment me?

What do I mean when I say “I love you?” HDIFAT?

What are my feelings about reevaluating my time so there is more for us?

What are my dreams for us now as a dialoging couple? HDIFAT?

## Session 3 “God”

### Opening prayer

#### Introductions –welcome newcomers

- \* Introduce yourself and your spouse.
- \* Tell us about yourselves--when you were married, when you were encountered, your family, jobs, hobbies, etc.

#### Announcements re: upcoming Marriage Encounter activities

#### Review Circle Guidelines if newcomers present (see handout)

#### Discussion Questions or brief presentation:

Would anyone like to share a way they were romanced as a result of last month’s assignment?

#### Emphasis on “God”

1. What does being “open” mean to you?
2. What does “trust” mean to you?
3. Read Matthew 11: 28 & 29 *“Come to me all you who are weary and burdened and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you and learn from me, for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For my yoke is easy and my burden is light.”* What burden is heaviest for you at this time?
4. Name a time when you have felt most loved by God or have felt most strongly the power of prayer.

#### Question for 10/10

In what ways does our relationship reflect Christ’s love for us, or how can we improve on that reflection? How do I feel about that?

#### Open Sharing Question

Share, if you wish, how you feel about your relationship being a reflection of Christ’s love for us, how you can improve on that, and how that makes you feel.

#### Set date, time, place, hosts, and session leaders for next session

#### Closing Prayer -- The Lord’s Prayer

#### Social time

#### Take Home Dialogue Questions on “God”

Where am I right now in my relationship to God? HDIFAT?

Do I really believe that God loves me unconditionally as I am? HDIFAMA?

God is love. HDIFAT?

God made you a part of my life. HDIFAT?

WAMFA the fact that God has a stake in our marriage?

WAMF when I experience the forgiveness of God through you?

How did our relationship reflect God’s love today? HDIFAT?

## Session 4 “Community”

### Opening prayer

### Introductions –welcome newcomers

- \* Introduce yourself and your spouse.
- \* Tell us about yourselves--when you were married, when you were encountered, your family, jobs, hobbies, etc.

### Announcements re: upcoming Marriage Encounter activities

### Does everyone have the handout on circle guidelines?

### Discussion Questions or brief presentation:

#### Emphasis on “Community”

1. How do I feel when we reach out to someone?
2. How do I feel when someone reaches out to us?

**Read Acts 2: 42-47** *“They devoted themselves to the apostles’ teaching and to the fellowship to the breaking of bread and to prayer. Everyone was filled with awe, and many wonders and miraculous signs were done by the apostles. All the believers were together and had everything in common. Selling their possessions and goods, they gave to anyone as he had need. Every day they continued to meet together in the temple courts. They broke bread in their homes and ate together with glad and sincere hearts, praising God and enjoying the favor of all the people. And the Lord added to their number daily those who were being saved.”* **If you lived in those days what would have impressed you about that community?**

### How do you think that passage relates to our community today?

3. When have you most experienced the love of a community?
4. If we were on trial for being Christians, would there be enough evidence to convict us? How do I feel about that?

### Question for 10/10

In what ways as a couple do we presently or might we in the future show our Christianity by reaching out to others? How does that make me feel?

### Open Sharing Question

Share, if you wish, ways you are currently reaching out or might in the future reach out to others and how you feel about that.

**Assignment:** Draw names of a secret couple. Before the next meeting, show your love to that couple by anonymous giving of small tokens of your love such as cards, prayers, small gifts (Dollar Stores are great), flowers, cookies, etc.

### Set date, time, place, hosts, and session leaders for next session

### Closing Prayer -- The Lord’s Prayer

### Social time

### Take Home Dialogue Questions on “Community”

HDIF about the way we use our time?

HDIF about the way we use our possessions?

Do I have confidence in other people when they tell me they love us? HDIF sharing this?

In what way has the community helped us since the Weekend? HDIFAMA?

## Session 5 “Sharing of Self”

### Opening prayer

### Introductions –welcome newcomers

- \* Introduce yourself and your spouse.
- \* Tell us about yourselves--when you were married, when you were encountered, your family, jobs, hobbies, etc.

### Announcements re: upcoming Marriage Encounter activities

### Discussion Questions or brief presentation:

Would anyone like to share what their secret couple did for them over the period since the last meeting?

#### Emphasis on “Sharing of Self”

1. What has been the most joyous moment of your life?
2. What was the most sorrowful moment of your life?
3. Share if you wish some of your fears in life (i.e. death of a spouse, being humiliated, cheated, rejected, etc.)
4. What feelings do I find most difficult to face in myself?
5. Read Isaiah 43: 1 “...*Fear not, for I have redeemed you; I have summoned you by name; you are mine.*” How does knowing that you are this important to God make you feel?

### Question for 10/10

In what ways has my self awareness grown and my self-image improved as a result of our sharing of feelings? How does that make me feel?

### Open Sharing Question

Share, if you wish, how you have become more aware of who you are or how your self image has improved through your sharing with your spouse, and how that makes you feel?

### Set date, time, place, hosts, and session leaders for next session

### Closing Prayer -- The Lord’s Prayer

### Social time

### Take Home Dialogue Questions on “Sharing of Self”

What feelings do I find most difficult to face in myself? HDIFAT

Do I need more time just for me? HDIF sharing this with you?

Is whatever I am doing in “my time” enriching our relationship or diminishing it? HDIFAT?

I am most confident in myself when \_\_\_\_\_? HDIFAT?

Has my self-image improved as a result of our dialogue? HDIFAT?

How have I grown in self-awareness and how does that affect us as a couple? HDIFAT?

# Session 6 “Reaching Out”

## Opening prayer

### Introductions –welcome newcomers

- \* Introduce yourself and your spouse.
- \* Tell us about yourselves--when you were married, when you were encountered, your family, jobs, hobbies, etc.

### Announcements re: upcoming Marriage Encounter activities

### Discussion Questions or brief presentation:

#### Emphasis on “Reaching Out”

1. How do I feel about giving and receiving love and support of couples through this circle?
2. Everyone has a stake in everyone else’s marriage. How do I feel about that?
3. How has being a part of this circle helped keep our relationship a priority?
4. How do I see us sharing our love with those around us and how do I feel about that?
5. In what ways might we be more involved in Marriage Encounter that will allow us to share that love?

**Activity:** Darken the room. Place a lighted candle in the center. Have enough candles for each couple to hold a candle. Leader couple lights their candle from the center candle and then passes it on to the next couple signifying Christ in each of us and the sharing of His love as we pass it on. As each couple lights their candle, Christ’s original flame (love) never diminishes, but just burns stronger as it grows to others. (May use the song “Pass it On.”)

### Question for 10/10

What ways do I think we can reach out to others to share our love for each other and for Christ? How does that make me feel?

### Open Sharing Question

Share, if you wish, ways you might reach out to others and share your couple love and your love for Christ and how that makes you feel?

### Set date, time, place, hosts, and session leaders for next session

### Closing Prayer -- The Lord’s Prayer

### Social time

### Take Home Dialogue Questions on “Sharing of Self”

What are my feelings about the importance of our couple relationship to the Church?

How do I feel about falling in love with our Church?

God expects us to be our brother’s keepers. HDIFAT

God needs our couple love for the salvation of the world. HDTMMF?

How do I see us sharing our love with those around us and HDIFAT?

## Session 7 “SEEING OUR GOODNESS”

### Opening prayer

#### Introductions –welcome newcomers

- \* Introduce yourself and your spouse.
- \* Tell us about yourselves--when you were married, when you were encountered, your family, jobs, hobbies, etc.

#### Announcements re: upcoming Marriage Encounter activities

#### Discussion Questions or brief presentation:

##### Emphasis on “Seeing Our Goodness”

1. Why is important to be able to see our good qualities?
2. How does the Isaiah 43 passage, *“I have called you by name, you are mine...You are precious in my sight, and honored, and I love you”* make you feel?
3. Do you find that in times when you are able to see the goodness in yourself, that you are more able to see the goodness in others.
4. Do you think that you accept and dwell on criticisms received more than on compliments received. If so, why is it more difficult to accept a compliment?
5. Why do we feel that it requires us to go out of our comfort zone to talk about the good in us?
6. Could you share a compliment about a personal quality of yours that you received and how you felt receiving it?

#### Question for 10/10

What do I see as my best quality and how do I feel sharing it with you?

#### Open Sharing Question

Share, if you wish, a good quality of yours and how you feel about sharing it with us.

#### Set date, time, place, hosts, and session leaders for next session

#### Closing Prayer -- The Lord’s Prayer

#### Social time

#### Take Home Dialogue Questions on “Seeing Our Goodness”

How do I feel when I recognize and accept a good quality in myself?

How do I feel when my spouse points out a good quality he/she sees in me?

Describe a time when my behavior had helped me recognize a good quality in myself.

HDMAMMF?

What good quality of mine do I have trouble accepting? How do I feel sharing this with you?

What attitudes do I have that prevent me from accepting compliments on my personal qualities?

HDMAMMF

How do I feel when I am able to accept a compliment about a personal quality?

## Session 8 “Privacy vs. Openness”

### Opening prayer

### Introductions –welcome newcomers

- \* Introduce yourself and your spouse.
- \* Tell us about yourselves--when you were married, when you were encountered, your family, jobs, hobbies, etc.

### Announcements re: upcoming Marriage Encounter activities

### Discussion Questions or brief presentation:

#### Emphasis on “Privacy vs. Openness”

1. **Sometimes privacy is beneficial and even necessary to our spiritual and psychological well-being. Indeed, solitude can nurture growth. But why is privacy--as opposite of openness--in the marriage relationship a problem?**
2. **What privacies in your married life can tend to make you live that part as married singles? i.e.:** (Private possessions: my kitchen, my checkbook, my children, my car  
Private rights: not to be disturbed at work, making certain decisions alone  
Private times: a favorite TV show, hobbies, going to bed alone to read)
3. **When you are open and step out of your privacies, what positive effects does it have on your relationship?** (Giving of our time to others, openness in listening, generosity with our possessions, willingness to share our feelings.)
4. **If our relationship with our spouse is to model Christ’s love for us, when Paul says in Philippians 2: 1-4, *“If you have any encouragement from being united with Christ, if any comfort from his love, if any fellowship with the Spirit, if any tenderness and compassion, then make my joy complete by being like-minded, having the same love, being one in spirit and purpose. Do nothing out of selfish ambition or vain conceit, but in humility consider others better than yourselves. Each of you should look not only to your own interests, but also to the interests of others.”* how does this relate?**

### Question for 10/10

When has your openness drawn me out of my privacy, and how does that make me feel?

### Open Sharing Question

Share, if you wish, a time when your openness affected your relationship in a positive way?

### Set date, time, place, hosts, and session leaders for next session

### Closing Prayer -- The Lord’s Prayer

### Social time

### Take Home Dialogue Questions on “Privacy vs. Openness”

What things do I consider mine? HDIFAT?

How have I kept you in focus today? HDIFAT?

HDIF knowing that I must change myself, not you, to allow our relationship to grow?

How can I be more sensitive to you? How do I feel sharing this with you?

What privacies of mine keep me from being truly open to you? HDIF sharing this with you?

HDIF knowing that we will always have to work for real closeness in our relationship?

# Session 9 “Listening”

## Opening prayer

### Introductions –welcome newcomers

- \* Introduce yourself and your spouse.
- \* Tell us about yourselves--when you were married, when you were encountered, your family, jobs, hobbies, etc.

### Announcements re: upcoming Marriage Encounter activities

### Discussion Questions or brief presentation:

#### Emphasis on “Listening”

1. **What are some of the things that limit your listening in your couple relationship?**
2. **Do any of these fears cause you to not be a good listener:** fear of change (If I really listen to you, I might see the need to change), fear of criticism (If I really listen to you, I’m going to hear you tell me something that is not good about me), fear of being used (All you want from me is a sounding board.) fear of disapproval, fear of ridicule, fear of rejection.
3. **In Matthew 13:16 Christ says, “*Blessed are your eyes because they see and your ears because they hear.*” In what ways is this directive to understanding the message about the kingdom similar to what is required in our spousal relationships?**
4. **In listening we respect our spouse’s “otherness”—the uniqueness that makes him/her special--and it requires a response in love. How do we show this love?**

### Question for 10/10

When recently did I see you as really listening to me? How does that make me feel?

### Open Sharing Question

Share, if you wish, a time when you were able to put aside yourself and listen to your spouse?

### Set date, time, place, hosts, and session leaders for next session

### Closing Prayer -- The Lord’s Prayer

### Social time

### Take Home Dialogue Questions on “Privacy vs. Openness”

How do I feel when I listen to you?

How do I feel when I want to be listened to?

In what areas have I not been able to listen to you? HDTMMF?

What attitudes in myself do I see that prevent me from listening to you and HDTMMF?

# Session 10 “Receiving from Others”

## Opening prayer

### Introductions –welcome newcomers

- \* Introduce yourself and your spouse.
- \* Tell us about yourselves--when you were married, when you were encountered, your family, jobs, hobbies, etc.

### Announcements re: upcoming Marriage Encounter activities

### Discussion Questions or brief presentation:

#### Emphasis on “Receiving from Others”

1. **Do you think that it is easier to give than to receive? Why or why not?**
2. **Do any of these attitudes or others prevent you from receiving help from your spouse—share an example:** thinking he/she should know my needs without having to be told, I told him/her before and nothing happened, I don’t need help—I can handle it myself?
3. **Why is it important for us to be able to be able to stretch out our hand to our Marriage Encounter Community or our community in general and accept help?**
4. **Do any of these attitudes prevent us from accepting help from our communities—share an example:** people look up to us, we have an image to uphold, we can’t share our downs, people won’t accept them, people will see us as less than they expected, attitude of not asking unless we are in a position to return the favor some day, attitude of lack of trust in community, attitude of imposing or burdening others with our problems.
5. **How does the Luke 11:23 passage where Jesus says, “*He who is not with me is against me and he who does not gather with me, scatters.*” relate to this issue?**

### Question for 10/10

How do I feel thinking about asking for and accepting help from you?

### Open Sharing Question

Share, if you wish, what fears I have that have kept me from asking our community or close friends for help, love, or comfort?

### Set date, time, place, hosts, and session leaders for next session

### Closing Prayer -- The Lord’s Prayer

### Social time

### Take Home Dialogue Questions on “Receiving from Others”

Where do I need help from you? How do I feel sharing this with you?

Have I asked you for help? HDTMMF

Am I really willing to accept help from you? How do I feel sharing this with you?

Have we ever asked the community to help us? How do I feel sharing this with you?

Am I really willing to accept help from others? How does that make me feel?

# Session 11 “Forgiveness & Reconciliation”

## Opening prayer

### Introductions –welcome newcomers

- \* Introduce yourself and your spouse.
- \* Tell us about yourselves--when you were married, when you were encountered, your family, jobs, hobbies, etc.

### Announcements re: upcoming Marriage Encounter activities

### Discussion Questions or brief presentation:

#### Emphasis on “Forgiveness & Reconciliation”

1. Forgiving yourself involves accepting yourself with all your strengths and weaknesses. Can you recall a time when you found it difficult to forgive yourself?
2. Forgiving others is key to staying in relationship. Why is it stated that we should not ask for forgiveness for feelings but for the behavior that flows out of the feelings?
3. What does the statement: “Forgiveness is my decision to heal a relationship—it may not mean that I agree with, condone, or support your actions but rather that I decide to love you as you are” say to you?
4. Why is it essential that we understand that in our daily relationships forgiveness is a gift of love that cannot be earned?
5. Why is it important to realize that forgiveness cannot be assumed—it must be spoken?
6. In Matthew 18: 22 when Peter asks how many times shall I forgive my brother when he sins against me, up to 7 times? Jesus answers, *“I tell you, not seven times, but seventy-seven times.”* What does this tell us about what is expected of us?

### Question for 10/10

My decision to forgive you is an act of love for you. How does that make me feel?

### Open Sharing Question

Share, if you wish, a time when the healing power of forgiveness allowed a loving relationship to be re-established and how that made you feel.

### Set date, time, place, hosts, and session leaders for next session

Closing Prayer -- The Lord’s Prayer

### Social time

### Take Home Dialogue Questions on “Forgiveness & Reconciliation”

When am I afraid to ask forgiveness? How do I feel sharing this with you?

When do I accept forgiveness from others? HDTMMF?

Do I accept God’s forgiveness? HDIFAT

When have I been able to make the decision to forgive and heal a relationship? HDIFAT

# Session 12 “Unity in Marriage”

## Opening prayer

### Introductions –welcome newcomers

- \* Introduce yourself and your spouse.
- \* Tell us about yourselves--when you were married, when you were encountered, your family, jobs, hobbies, etc.

### Announcements re: upcoming Marriage Encounter activities

### Discussion Questions or brief presentation:

#### Emphasis on “Unity in Marriage”

1. What is the difference between sharing a home, money, food & fun, and complete unity? Is it possible to share all worldly things and still remain strangers?
2. God’s plan for marriage is complete unity -- how does the fact that this is God’s plan affect the importance of this goal?
3. The goal of dialogue is unity -- how does taking on our spouse’s feelings help us to become one?
4. Has your openness to feelings in dialogue created more sensitivity in your relationship in general? Can you share an example when you were open and sensitive to your spouse and how you felt about that (Example: your spouse came home and the non-verbal said something was wrong—you felt concern.)
5. Ecclesiastes 4: 9-12 says, *“Two are better than one, because they have a good return for their work: If one falls down, his friend can help him up. But pity the man who falls and has no one to help him up! Also, if two lie down together, they will keep warm. But how can one keep warm alone? Though one may be overpowered, two can defend themselves. A cord of three strands is not quickly broken.”* What does this passage--especially the cord of 3 strands--mean to you?

### Question for 10/10

In what ways do I see the closeness in our dialogue affecting the closeness in our relationship and how do I feel sharing this with you?

### Open Sharing Question

Share, if you wish, in what ways has striving for unity affected your relationship or your life?

### Set date, time, place, hosts, and session leaders for next session

### Closing Prayer -- The Lord’s Prayer

### Social time

### Take Home Dialogue Questions on “Forgiveness & Reconciliation”

Why do we dialogue? HDTMMF?

Do we strive for unity in our dialogue? HDTMMF?

In what ways am I open to you in dialogue? HDTMMF?

What attitudes prevent me from giving myself more totally to you ? HDIFAT?

Am I as understanding of you in our daily relationship as I am in dialogue? HDTMMF?

# Session 13 “The Gift of Dialogue”

## Opening prayer

### Introductions –welcome newcomers

- \* Introduce yourself and your spouse.
- \* Tell us about yourselves--when you were married, when you were encountered, your family, jobs, hobbies, etc.

### Announcements re: upcoming Marriage Encounter activities

### Discussion Questions or brief presentation:

#### Emphasis on “The Gift of Dialogue”

1. Why is it important to have a constant commitment to grow and deepen our couple relationship?
2. How does dialogue help unite us and bring us closer?
3. Can you recall a dialogue that you felt resulted in a strengthening of your relationship? How did that make you feel?
4. Are there any special techniques—different places, time of day, methods, etc. that you have found that work for you that you might share with the group?
5. We’re often tempted by the world’s ways to take our relationships for granted. How is the following passage from Hebrews 4: 14-16 reassuring: *“Therefore since we have a great high priest who has gone through the heavens, Jesus the Son of God, let us hold firmly to the faith we profess. For we do not have a high priest who is unable to sympathize with our weaknesses but we have one who has been tempted in every way, just as we are—yet was without sin. Let us then approach the throne of grace with confidence, so that we may receive mercy and find grace to help us in our time of need.”*

### Question for 10/10

How am I dissatisfied with my commitment to you? How do I feel sharing this with you?

### Open Sharing Question

Share, if you wish, how you would like to improve your commitment to your spouse.

### Set date, time, place, hosts, and session leaders for next session

### Closing Prayer -- The Lord’s Prayer

### Social time

### Take Home Dialogue Questions on “The Gift of Dialogue”

What have I been preoccupied with lately that has prevented dialogue? HDTMMF?

What attitudes toward dialogue do I need to change? HDTMMF?

What do I like most and least about our dialogue? How do I feel sharing this with you?

Do we strive for unity in our dialogue? HDTMMF?

How do I feel when we approach unity of feeling through dialogue?

# Session 14 “The Gift of Leisure”

## Opening prayer

### Introductions –welcome newcomers

- \* Introduce yourself and your spouse.
- \* Tell us about yourselves--when you were married, when you were encountered, your family, jobs, hobbies, etc.

### Announcements re: upcoming Marriage Encounter activities

### Discussion Questions or brief presentation:

#### Emphasis on “The Gift of Leisure”

1. In addition to the many gifts God has given us in our relationships, there is the gift of leisure. Are you able to enjoy leisure time or do you find yourself thinking, “I should be working,” or “Planning and preparation for this leisure is too much work.” How can we avoid these issues which interfere with our freedom to “play?”
2. Can you recall a time when an attitude--positive or negative—affected your leisure time and how you felt about it?
3. How much of your leisure time do you spend apart as opposed to spending with your spouse? Does this have a positive or negative effect on your relationship?
4. Ecclesiastes 3: 12-13 says, *“I know that there is nothing better for men than to be happy and do good while they live. That everyone may eat and drink, and find satisfaction in all his toil—this is the gift of God.”* What does this say about our leisure?

### Question for 10/10

In what ways might we plan to spend more leisure time together, and how do I feel about making this decision?

### Open Sharing Question

Share, if you wish, a time when you enjoyed your leisure time together and how this affected your relationship.

### Set date, time, place, hosts, and session leaders for next session

### Closing Prayer -- The Lord’s Prayer

### Social time

### Take Home Dialogue Questions on “The Gift of Leisure”

What fun things do I most enjoy doing? How do I feel sharing this with you?

Does my leisure time include you? How do I feel sharing this with you?

How do I feel when we spend our leisure time together?

How often do we laugh with each other, take a walk or fly a kite together? HDIFAT?

# Session 15 “Signs of Love”

## Opening prayer

### Introductions –welcome newcomers

- \* Introduce yourself and your spouse.
- \* Tell us about yourselves--when you were married, when you were encountered, your family, jobs, hobbies, etc.

### Announcements re: upcoming Marriage Encounter activities

### Discussion Questions or brief presentation:

#### Emphasis on “The Signs of Love”

1. In the marriage relationship, we are to be a mirror of God’s love for us. How does this responsibility make me feel?
2. Grace is God’s presence within us which we receive as a gift. Why do we need the gift of grace--that moment of strength--in order to be faithful, to forgive, to be patient, to give comfort?
3. The grace of forgiveness allows us to heal each other and to be healed by others. Can you recall a time when you were hurt or when you hurt someone and what made you decide to heal or be healed and how it made you feel?
4. The grace is there, but we must be aware of it and call upon it. Why do you think these moments of strength are particularly needed in our closest relationships?
5. Jesus tells us in Matthew 6: 14-15 *“For if you forgive men when they sin against you, your heavenly Father will also forgive you. But if you do not forgive men their sins, your Father will not forgive your sins.”* How does this speak to the importance of forgiveness?

### Question for 10/10

In what ways do I feel that we are successful and where do we fail in being a mirror of God’s love? How does this make me feel?

### Open Sharing Question

Share, if you wish, any way you feel you are successful or in need of improvement in being a mirror of God’s love and how this makes you feel.

### Set date, time, place, hosts, and session leaders for next session

### Closing Prayer -- The Lord’s Prayer

### Social time

### Take Home Dialogue Questions on “Signs of Love”

What are my feelings about us being called to be a visible sign of the church?

What are my feelings when I experience the forgiveness of God in our relationship?

What are my feelings about the fact that God has a stake in our marriage?

How do I feel knowing we have been commissioned by God to be an active force in his kingdom?